

SIGNIFICANCE OF FRANK WAIT HOUSE 201 North Ninth Street

The home of Frank Wait, 201 North Ninth Street would seem to qualify as an historic landmark within the meaning of that term as set forth in the historic preservation ordinance of the City of Las Vegas under section 4, subsection G, paragraph (3) articles (b) "serves as a valuable example of indigenous materials or craftsmanship," (d) "represents a rare building type, style, design or indigenous building form," and (e) "is identifiable with [a person] or [event] significant in local, state or national history."

To deal first with the historical significance of Frank Wait, it should be said that he was not per se a "mover and shaker" during the forty five years or so that he lived in southern Nevada. He was, instead, more of an outstanding exemplar of a type of "character" associated with early day Las Vegas. He was more of a throwback to the frontier lawman like his contemporaries, Sam Gay and Joe Keate.

Wait was born in South Dakota in 1880 and, after knocking around the West and mid-West, arrived in Reno in 1902. In 1905, he joined the prospectors and gold seekers thronging to the boom camps of Tonopah and Goldfield. From Goldfield he went to Eldorado Canyon in 1906. He spent the next eight years working a gold deposit across the Colorado river in Arizona. Moving to Las Vegas in 1915, he became the city's first city marshall, patrolling the streets on an old black mare named "Nancy Hanks." Most of his working years were thereafter spent in law enforcement of one kind or another. In 1919, he became undersheriff to Sheriff Sam Gay. It was also in that year that his association with the story of the supposed Indian "renegade" Queho began. Queho was alleged to have killed several persons and was tracked unsuccessfully across the southern Nevada desert for forty-five days by Frank Wait and police officer Joe May. (In 1940, bones found in a cave near the Colorado River were "identified" by Wait as those of Queho.)

Wait served as undersheriff until 1927, when he became captain of the guard at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City. Returning to Las Vegas in 1930 he was defeated in an election for sheriff that year and again in 1934. During that period he served as a "security guard" in local casinos, including the Boulder Club on Fremont Street. He again became undersheriff in 1936, was dismissed in 1938, and briefly served as police chief beginning in 1939 before again being dismissed in 1941. (Wait's being dismissed on several occasion should not be taken as indication of his performance as an officer of the law. Police and sheriff's positions were highly politicized in those years. In 1941, for example, he said that he refused to close the houses of prostitution on "Block 16" because he was obeying a court injunction. He was fired for non-feasance by the city commission, which had ordered him to move against the houses.)

Following his law career, Wait served for a time as game warden of Clark County before retiring to his recently completed home on 9th Street. He died there in January 1950.

Wait began working on the home on Ninth Street in 1930 and worked on it off and on for over ten years. He and his wife spent many years searching for colorful stones, semi precious gems, petroglyphs and petrified wood with which to decorate it. The *Review-Journal* in 1948 already referred to the house as a "tourist showplace" and a "landmark." A one-of-a-kind structure, it is a superb example vernacular architecture and craftsmanship. It has been remarkable well preserved by subsequent owners. Additions to the property have been made in keeping with the original style and materials.